National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

National Institutes of Health

Division of AIDS

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Questions and Answers

Release of Priority Scores to Applicants
For the Units for Clinical Trials Networks RFA

1. **Applicants to the RFA for Units for HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks will receive their priority scores on March 30, 2006. What do these priority scores represent?**

The priority scores that are released to the applicants for the Units for HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks RFA represent the results of the peer review process. The priority scores are based on an average of individual ratings of scientific merit assigned by the reviewers. Although the ratings range from 1.0 (outstanding) to 5.0 (acceptable), they are converted to numbers ranging from 100 to 500 when sent to the applicants. They are not indicative of funding decisions as no decisions have been made as of yet.

2. **Are these priority scores public?**

No, these priority scores are considered highly confidential; NIAID will only discuss an individual priority score with an individual applicant, regardless of whether or not the applicants choose to share their results with others.

3. **Where do Principal Investigators obtain their priority scores?**

The priority score is posted for each individual Principal Investigator on the NIH eRA Commons. The website is located at https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons; however, in order to access the information on the NIH eRA Commons you must be registered as a user.

4. **If a Principal Investigator is not a registered as an eRA Commons user, how can s/he obtain their priority score?**

The principal investigator or someone at the research institution with signatory authority in grant-related matters can register in the eRA Commons on the NIH

eRA Commons homepage located at https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/.
Once on the website, click on the Grantee Organization Registration link, where
there are step-by-step instructions for registration. For assistance, you can contact
the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov.

**5. What aspects of the CTU application were scored and are those scores
represented in the priority score?**

Each component of the CTU application, including the administrative component,
scientific areas for each Clinical Research Site, and the overall Clinical Research
Site, received an adjectival or descriptive score as opposed to a numerical score.
Each reviewer then gave each CTU application an overall numerical score. The
priority score is the average of each of the <u>overall numerical</u> scores.

6. When will these adjectival (descriptive) scores be released?

The adjectival (descriptive) scores will be included in the CTU Summary
Statements, which we expect to release to the CTU Principal Investigators in late
June - early July.

**7. Will applicants receive any additional information about their overall
priority scores and when?**

Yes. Applicants will receive summary statements, which are official documents
describing the outcome of the initial peer review process. In addition to the
adjectival scores that will be provided in this particular instance, summary
statements generally have a short synopsis of the reviewers' comments and
include:
    a. <u>Priority scores;</u>
    b. <u>Percentiles,</u> which are the relative position of each application's
       priority score among all the scores assigned by the reviewers;
    c. <u>Codes</u> for various areas of concern (e.g., human subjects research);
    d. <u>Recommended budget</u> based on the reviewer's assessment of the
       proposed research.

Again, it is anticipated that the summary statements will be released by early
summer (late June-July 2006).

**8. Why are the priority scores and summary statements being released
separately?**

It is a standard practice for NIH to release applicants' scores prior to the release of
the summary statement. This is done because the priority scores are available
immediately and the summary statements take a longer period of time to develop.

9. Do the priority scores and/or summary statements indicate whether or not an application will be funded?

No. The priority scores and summary statements **<u>do not</u>** reflect funding decisions. NIAID will develop a funding plan that will take into account the results of the peer review (priority scores and summary statements) as well as NIAID's research priorities, the proposed research plans of the newly funded Networks, the Network's research capacity and capabilities, and budget. After the funding plan is developed, a second-level of review is conducted by NIAID's Advisory Council. The advisory committee then makes funding recommendations to the NIAID director based on program priorities and policy issues; it does not reassess the science.

10. When will the funding plan for the Units for HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks be reviewed by NIAID's Advisory Council?

It is anticipated that the funding plan for the Clinical Trials Units will be reviewed by NIAID's Advisory Council in September 2006.

11. When will the actual awards for the Units for HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks be made?

It is anticipated the awards for the Units for HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Networks will be made late in calendar year 2006.